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SUBJECT: PROMOTION OF ENGLISH IN CHILE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

1. Summary: Over the past two years, Embassy Santiago has made a substantial contribution to the advancement of English teaching in Chile. PA has initiated and implemented a variety of projects with the assistance of the Office of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and the Office of International Information Programs (IIP), in partnership with the Chilean Ministry of Education or the Fulbright Commission. The surge in English learning may be one factor contributing to the doubling of the number of Chilean students, from 1,612 to 3,290, choosing to study in the U.S. in the past year. The case for a Regional English Language Officer (requested in last year's MPP) to be located in Santiago is stronger than ever. End summary.

2. The Government of Chile has made English teaching and learning a priority. Minister of Education Sergio Bitar originally stated that Chile should be bilingual by 2010, the year of Chile's Bicentennial celebration. His expectations have since scaled back, but English education remains a priority for the Lagos administration and will remain so for the incoming administration as well. It became apparent that Chile must first improve the quality of teaching, so teacher training has become the thrust of the GOC's work in English education. Post has responded to the request from the Ministry of Education to assist in this endeavor in many ways, enumerated below.

3. English Language Fellows: For the last three years, PA and the ECA Office of English Language Programs have provided a Senior English Language Fellow to work with English teacher trainers at the Ministry of Education, binational centers (BNCs), and universities for a period of ten months. This has had an immediate impact in increased professionalization of the English teacher corps.

4. Teacher Resource Site: The Fellow from last year worked with the NGO "Fundacion Chile" and the Ministry of Education to develop an English teachers' resource page on the Internet. Fundacion Chile provides assistance to the Ministry and had maintained a general education site for years, but it only recently, with PA's help, developed this English language resource site for teachers. Now teachers can log on to find readings, tests, games, and lesson plans -- all with American content.

5. Teacher Networks: PA contracted an English-language teacher trainer to work with the Ministry of Education to establish training networks for English teachers and to work on curriculum development. The networks are the only way to provide in-service training to the 3,000 English teachers in Chile. They are thriving, and are functioning well into their second year. In addition, thanks to funding from ECA, the Ministry of Education is giving mini-scholarships to teachers of English in four key cities for enhanced professional training.

6. English Language Specialists: In the past year, we have had six English Language Specialists come to Chile (a significant increase over previous years) to provide short-term training. These specialists have developed workshops for public school teachers, BNC teachers and university professors. This program is particularly effective because we are able to choose a specialist based on the needs of the host institution, and these specialists are flexible enough to provide workshops to a variety of different audiences.

7. Speakers: PA has also brought in speakers through ECA for curriculum development in areas such as American Studies, African American literature, English for Special Purposes, and marketing techniques for English language schools (including the BNCs). In parallel, speakers recruited by IIP have shared expertise on a variety of

MPP-related topics. While not all speakers have specifically addressed English learning, the content of their presentations have encouraged scholars and other professionals to improve their fluency and advance their skills in using English for research.

18. English via Broadcast: One of the first projects Post contributed to the GOC was the purchase of one year's worth of "Sesame English", a series designed to help young Spanish speakers learn English. This full year of programming, shown on national television on Saturday mornings as well as on the educational network used in classrooms, recently ended, but PA Santiago is negotiating to extend it for another year.

19. Essay Contests: PA Santiago sponsored an English essay contest two years in a row for English teachers, university students and high school students. Winners in each of the separate categories won two-week study trips to the U.S. Anecdotal evidence indicates they became "citizen ambassadors" for the U.S., and advocates of English, on their return.

110. Embassy Web Site: PA created its own English teachers' web page that contains links to teacher and student resources, international testing materials, and online publications. In October, this English site logged 686 hits. Since it is accessed from the main Embassy web page, which gets an average of 120,000 hits per month, we expect a rapid increase in users. PA's Information Resource Center has also generated resource material with U.S. content for English teachers.

111. Book Donations: PA has begun systematic contributions of books in English to public schools, American Corners, the binational centers, and universities. This is an effective means of providing not only goodwill but also materials that are needed in Chile, as the cost of books in English is high and the availability is limited. Chile has few public libraries, and schools have limited collections.

112. Revival of TESOL Chile: Post has collaborated with several organizations to promote English language education. PA was instrumental in launching the new TESOL Chile, a professional organization for English teachers. PA provided funding, books, and speakers for the last three TESOL conferences and newsletters. Due to poor pay and lack of training, English teachers often feel they are on the margins in terms of professionalism and respect. The regeneration of this once defunct organization has given English teachers more prestige and has provided a venue for teacher training workshops. Last year, PA sent a member of Chile TESOL to the international TESOL conference, where she made valuable contacts.

113. Intensive Residential Seminar: Drawing on the idea of Summer Institutes at others posts, PA was instrumental in early 2005 in creating "English Summer Town", a two-week summer English immersion camp for teachers. The Fulbright Commission and the Ministry of Education signed on as eager partners once the concept and benefits became clear. January 2006 will mark the second annual "Town," during which two sets of 80 teachers each will spend a week in a series of workshops, discussions, and evening cultural events. As last year, PAO Santiago will host an American style barbecue at her residence for the entire group. Post will also provide a presentation on Martin Luther King, Jr., including a lecture and video.

114. Books in a Box Pilot Project: At English Summer Town this year, two specialists and the English Language Fellow offered a weeklong intensive "Books in a Box" training. PA provided 25 sets of the books to 25 teachers and conducted the official pilot project for the program in Latin America. Results have been mixed in terms of cost effectiveness, since discussions with the teachers who received the books and training indicate they have not shared them widely with others.

115. ExpoIngles: The ExpoIngles Fair, the first of its type in Chile, involved all of the Anglophone embassies in Santiago and other institutions that promote the teaching of English. Five thousand students and teachers interested in studying either in Chile or abroad, attended. PA's booth promoted American destinations for study.

116. International Visitors: In FY 2005, for the first time, an International Visitor candidate was selected to examine U.S. language education for native speakers as well as English as a Second Language. This Ministry of Education official works on curriculum development in the English language program, and has incorporated some of the lessons learned during the visit into the curriculum.

As such, these changes will affect the way students will learn English nation-wide.

17. Voluntary Visitors: PA is organizing a Voluntary Visitors' program for five English teachers for January of 2006. These are highly active members of a Ministry of Education network who hold key roles in their schools and communities in English teaching. None has traveled abroad in the past. They are involved in TESOL, in teacher training, and in educational reform. These teachers plan to visit schools and learn how American teachers deal with immigrant children who do not speak English. They will also learn about new methodologies and techniques for working with few resources.

18. WorldTeach: PA Santiago has provided information and encouragement to the not-for-profit organization WorldTeach run by Harvard, which brings volunteers to teach English. The pilot program in Antofagasta last year was so successful that WorldTeach increased its number of volunteers from 16 to 30 and lengthened their tours from one semester to two. PA also works with U.S. universities with sizable student populations in Chile, encouraging students to volunteer at schools to provide Chilean counterparts with exposure to native speakers.

19. English Teaching Assistants: The Fulbright Commission has become involved in the English education movement by establishing six American English Teaching Assistants as a pilot project for school year 2005 and planning for another 10 for school year 2006. All assistants are placed in universities and serve as in-class native speaking resources rather than as teachers. Most are also volunteering in public schools. Fulbright maintains contact with these assistants through Internet and phone contact and PA staff meet with them when traveling to their cities.

20. Binational Centers (BNCs): PA Santiago supports a network of BNCs in Chile, the oldest of which was established 67 years ago. There are currently BNCs in Santiago, Iquique, Antofagasta, Calama, La Serena, Valparaiso, Curic, Chillan, Concepcion, Osorno and Puerto Montt. Since the cut-off of funding of BNCs by USIA, the centers have survived through offering English courses. A priority goal for the embassy this year has been to ensure that the BNCs meet a standard of excellence in providing instruction, academic advising, and library resources in a safe, congenial environment. PA Santiago assistance to BNCs has been in the form of training educational advisors, librarians/research staff, administrative personnel and directors. In addition, we have made donations of books and journals, sponsored speakers and English Teaching specialists, and some equipment, such as computers and power point projectors.

21. American Corners: The Corners provide easy and attractive access to a wide range of resources, informal dialogue, and speakers, to promote greater understanding of U.S. culture, policy, and current affairs. We created two Corners in Santiago in the past year and our overall goal is to establish three more, in Arica, Valdivia and Punta Arenas. While the Corners do not offer courses, they do offer informal chat sessions in English, and lectures, seminars and exhibits supplied by PA. The Corners are perfect venues for embassy officer outreach; recently an embassy consular officer gave a talk on modifications in the student visa process, and a political officer addressed United Nations reform.

22. Peace Corps: Post is exploring the possible return of the Peace Corps to train English teachers in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. This project is awaiting final approval from the Peace Corps following two exploratory visits to Chile by the Chief of Operations for Inter America, but budget limitations may put it on hold. The plan involves having Peace Corps volunteers work with the Ministry's networks for teacher training.

23. Conclusion: Despite the wide attention given to English language education in Chile over the past two years, serious deficits still exist not only in the average Chilean's ability to speak English but also among the English teachers themselves. Only an estimated three percent of Chileans are fluent in English. The decision of the GOC to require testing and credentialing for all teachers has created widespread discontent, even rebellion, among the teachers.

24. The Ministry has requested help from PA Santiago in this next step of credentialing, another sign that the Embassy has surged forward to become a major contributor in the area of English teaching in Chile. Providing the kind of guidance needed to effect transformation of the education system requires specific skills and full-time

focus. The addition of a RELO in country would boost this project and would provide the opportunity to insert American content into what continues to be a heavily British curriculum. The regional officer would also work with the network of Binational Centers to standardize and upgrade the level of English taught there. In short, while PA's efforts in English teaching in the past two years have yielded positive, tangible successes, a RELO would provide the professional expertise needed to coordinate all of PA's programs in this area, to build on and sustain this momentum.

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